

Message Text

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12

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SCCT-01 SY-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PPT-01 SCA-01 MED-02 OPR-02 A-01 PER-01 PM-03

DODE-00 L-02 (ISO) W

----- 047325

R 151543Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4347

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

POLAD EUCOM

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: APER, ASEC CGEN, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: DETENTION OF FSO C. MICHAEL KONNER BY "PALESTINIAN
COMMANDOS"

REF: BEIRUT 5310 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: FSO C. MICHAEL KONNER, TDY IN BEIRUT, DETAINED
BY PERSONS IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AS "PALESTINIANS" AND
"COMMANDOS" MAY 13 FROM APPROXIMATELY 0700 TO 2015 HOURS.
INTERROGATED, HIT, KICKED AND PUSHED ABOUT, BUT NOT
SERIOUSLY HURT. HAS DEPARTED FOR AMMAN TO CONTINUE MIDDLE
EAST TOUR. END SUMMARY.

2. FSO-6 C. MICHAEL KONNER, ASSIGNED TO US EUCOM POLAD,
ARRIVED BEIRUT EVENING MAY 12 FOR TDY VISIT AS PART
MIDDLE EAST FAMILIARIZATION TOUR. BEFORE REPORTING TO
EMBASSY MAY 13, TOOK EARLY MORNING WALK.

3. AT APPROXIMATELY 0700 HOURS, WHILE IN VICINITY
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PLACE DES MARTYRS (BUSY MAIN SQUARE OF OLD BEIRUT),

KONNER ATTEMPTED PHOTOGRAPH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE STAND. A CIVILIAN, LATER CALLED "MAJOR" BY HIS COLLEAGUES, GRABBED HIM AND DEMANDED HIS PASSPORT. KONNER DECIDED DENY HAD PASSPORT WITH HIM, BUT AFTER CROWD BEGAN TO GATHER, GAVE "MAJOR" HIS MILITARY ID. WHEN "MAJOR" WENT TO MAKE TELEPHONE CALL, KONNER BROKE AWAY AND RAN, BUT WAS SOON OVERTAKEN BY "MAJOR" AND TWO OTHER MEN. IN ESCAPE EFFORT, DROPPED HIS DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT, WHICH "MAJOR" HAD RECOVERED. KONNER ALSO LOST AT SAME TIME UNCLASSIFIED LETTER TO AMBASSADOR FROM EUCOM POLAD AND HIS ITINERARY WHICH INCLUDES VISIT TO ISRAEL. THESE ITEMS APPARENTLY NOT RECOVERED BY HIS CAPTORS.

4. KONNER THEN TAKEN TO BUILDING ABOUT 10 MINUTES DRIVE FROM PLACE OF CAPTURE. HERE HIS BELONGINGS WERE TAKEN. HE WAS QUESTIONED RE PROPOSED ITINERARY. HE DENIED INTENT VISIT ISRAEL. KONNER THEN TAKEN TO CELL BLOCK IN BASEMENT WHERE AT LEAST 15 OTHER PRISONERS HELD. TAKEN UPSTAIRS TWICE FOR MORE DETAILED QUESTIONS. KONNER WAS ASKED ABOUT HIS ITINERARY, HIS FAMILY, HIS WORK WITH MILITARY. ALSO ASKED IF HE WAS JEWISH, WHICH HE DENIED. AGAIN ASKED ABOUT POSSIBLE INTENT TRAVEL TO ISRAEL, HE DENIED PLANS BUT SAID HAD VISITED THERE SEVERAL YEARS AGO AS TOURIST. 'HE HAS SERVED TWO YEARS IN TEL AIV). CAPTORS ACCUSED HIM OF SPYING AND WORKING FOR CIA. KONNER SUGGESTED CAPTORS DEVELOP HIS FILM AS PROOF HIS INNOCENT INTENT. ALTHOUGH CAPTORS SAID THEY DOING SO, CAMERA LATER RETURNED WITH FILM INTACT.

5. ABOUT 2015 HOURS KONNER AGAIN TAKEN UPSTAIRS WHERE MOST OF HIS PERSONAL BELONGINGS RETURNED. PEN AND 200 US DOLLARS MISSING, WHICH CAPTORS PROMISED RETURN CARE OF EMBASSY IF FOUND. CAPTORS RETAINED NOTEBOOK SHEET WITH POLITICAL QUESTIONS ON LEBANESE INTERNAL SITUATION KONNER HAD INTENDED ASK EMBASSY OFFICERS DURING CONSULTATION. DRIVEN TO UNIDENTIFIED LOCALE WHERE PUT IN TAXI FOR EMBASSY.

6. ALTHOUGH CAPTORS NOT IDENTIFIED, THEY REFERRED TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SELVES AS "PALESTINIANS" AND "COMMANDOS". DURING CAPTIVITY, KONNER WAS HIT, KICKED AND PUSHED ABOUT BUT NOT TORTURED DURING INTERROGATION.

7. EMBASSY DOCTOR EXAMINED KONNER MORNING MAY 14. PHYSICAL EXAMINATION REVEALED NO INJURIES AND KONNER FOUND FIT TO TRAVEL. AS PRECAUTION, HOWEVER, KONNER REFERRED TO AUH FOR X-RAYS WHICH NOT YET AVAILABLE.

EMBASSY DOCTOR WILL POUCH FULL REPORT TO MED.

8. ON EMBASSY SUGGESTION, KONNER ABANDONED PLAN TRAVEL OVERLAND TO DAMASCUS, AND INSTEAD FLEW TO AMMAN AND WILL CONTINUE ON TO TEL AVIV AS PLANNED.

9. KONNER STATES HE NOT AWARE EMBASSY ADVICE RE OFFICIAL TRAVEL TO LEBANON IN REFTTEL, WHICH SENT TO USCINCERUR AS WELL AS STATE.

10. DCM PLANS CALLS ON SURETE GENERAL CHIEF COLONEL ANTOINE DAHDAH AS WELL AS ON FORNMIN TO DISCUSS THIS CASE AND OTHER INCIDENTS INVOLVING US CITIZENS IN BEIRUT. CABLE WILL FOLLOW RE RESULTS THESE CALLS AND FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS RE TRAVEL TO LEBANON IF DEEMED NECESSARY. AMBASSADOR MENTIONED MATTER TO FORNMIN TAQLA THIS MORNING. TAQLA DISTRESSED, APOLOGIZED AND REQUESTED DETAILS.

11. IN KONNER'S WORDS, HE QUOTE CAME TO LEBANON TO LEARN OF LOCAL CONDITIONS BUT HAD NOT EXPECTED TO EXPERIENCE THEM IN SO PERSONAL A MANNER END QUOTE. GODLEY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTION, PALESTINIANS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BEIRUT06229
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750171-1161
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750546/aaaabpqx.tel
Line Count: 138
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BEIRUT 5310
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <29 MAY 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <08 OCT 2003 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DETENTION OF FSO C. MICHAEL KONNER BY "PALESTINIAN COMMANDOS"
TAGS: APER, ASEC, CGEN, PINS, LE, (KONNER, C MICHAEL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006